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► Dalits Demand Amendment In Census Questionnaire

KATHMANDU, Aug 19: Representatives of the Dalit communities have submitted a 12-point charter of demands to the vice chairman of the National Planning Commission (NPC) Dr. Jagdish Chandra Pokhrel, calling for a review in the census procedures.

They also demanded compilation of actual statistics of the Dalit communities through the census.

Representatives of the National Dalit Commission, Federation of Dalit NGOs, CA members representing the Dalit communities and others handed over the memorandum to Pokhrel.

The total population of the Dalit community was lowered to 13 per cent in the 2001 census compared to 16 per cent population in the 1991 census. Representatives of the Dalit communities drew attention of the NPC not to repeat such mistake while collecting the data during the census.

They demanded 20 per cent guarantee of the people of this community at all levels of the entire process of the census. Also they have demanded to launch special awareness-raising programmes up to the village level to guarantee the maximum participation of the Dalit people in the census.

Among the demands are: questions related to ethnicity and caste should be placed at the end of the questionnaire, including the column related to traditional occupation and possibility of livelihood; and the provision of inter-caste marriage should be included for identifying the ethnic identity.

On the occasion, chairman of the National Dalit Commission Bijul Kumar BK warned of agitation if their demands were not fulfilled and representation of the community was not ensured during the census.

Dalit woman rights activist Kamala Hemchuri said issues concerning Dalits should be included in the questionnaire to bring the true statistics of the Dalits though the questionnaires were in the process to publication.

Receiving the memorandum, Dr. Pokhrel said amendment in the questionnaires cannot be made as preparation is underway to publish them soon but discussions can be held regarding the factual statistics of people of the Dalit communities in the census.

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